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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* United Nations welcomes release of more hostages by Bosnian Serbs; says it will not be satisfied until all are set free.

* UNHCR says humanitarian situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is critical; Bosnian Serbs continue to block food convoys despite recent agreement on resumption of humanitarian deliveries.

* Secretary-General welcomes Portugal's decision to increase its contribution to United Nations peace-keeping budget.

* Administrative and Budgetary Committee discusses support account for peace-keeping operations.

* Secretary-General names Livio Muzi Falconi of Italy as new United Nations Chief of Protocol.

* UNDCP to establish Drug Preventive Network of Americas on 26 June.

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The Bosnian Serbs today released a large batch of the United Nations personnel held hostage in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A United Nations spokesman confirmed that 26 peace-keepers had been released and were en route to Novisad. However, he stressed that the Organization would not be satisfied until all its personnel had been set free. Meanwhile, the Bosnian Serbs claimed to have released all but 14 or 15 of the hostages.

There were also reports that most weapons collection points and observation posts in the Sarajevo area had been "de-blocked", according to the spokesman. The United Nations planned to resupply them and to rotate troops as soon as security conditions permitted.

There were low levels of fighting throughout the United Nations mission area yesterday and today, the spokesman continued. There were also unconfirmed reports that the Bosnian Government was massing troops in the Breza Ilijas area some 15 kilometres north of

(more)

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Sarajevo. Some sources expected serious military activity there shortly, but the United Nations could not verify those reports.

The situation in Sector South in Croatia remained stable but tense, the spokesman said. One of the United Nations vehicles stolen yesterday was returned, and the local authorities promised that a second would also be returned. There were unconfirmed reports that the men involved in the killing of a Kenyan peace-keeper on Sunday had been arrested. The soldier was shot dead while trying to prevent the hijacking of another vehicle.

In another development, the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia met today in Geneva. It was the last meeting to be attended by Lord Owen, who is being replaced as Co-Chairman of the Conference by former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt.

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The humanitarian situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is critical, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Two desperately-needed food convoys bound for Sarajevo have been blocked by the Bosnian Serbs, despite the agreement on the resumption of humanitarian deliveries to the city signed in Pale last week. The only food reaching the Bosnian capital is being carried by trucks over Mount Igman.

The Bosnian Serbs had also given clearance for convoys to enter Zepa. However, the UNHCR decided it would be unsafe to move any convoys in eastern Bosnia after Bosnian Serb television showed pictures of ammunition purportedly found inside sacks of flour.

Meanwhile, a convoy bound for Gorazde has been held up since Sunday. The Bosnian Serbs gave clearance for it to proceed yesterday, but the road into the town was blocked by mines. The Bosnian Serbs would not give safety guarantees for United Nations engineers to deal with the problem.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today announced that Portugal had responded positively to his initiative inviting governments to consider increasing their contributions to peace-keeping operations. Portugal agreed to voluntarily join the Group B countries -- those that pay the same contributions to peace-keeping as to the regular budget. It had been a

member of Group C -- countries that contribute to peace-keeping on the basis of 20 per cent of their regular budget assessment.

The Secretary-General expressed his deep appreciation to the Portuguese Government for such a tangible demonstration of its commitment to the United Nations, particularly at a time when the Organization's financial situation was so precarious.

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The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) has begun the second part of its resumed forty-ninth session by considering the support account for peace-keeping operations. The representative of France, speaking for the European Union, said the account should continue to be financed through a charge on each peace-keeping operation equivalent to 8.5 per cent of an operation's civilian component.

In supporting a recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the French representative added that specific requests for variations of posts and other resources from previously approved levels should be considered by the ACABQ on behalf of the General Assembly.

The Advisory Committee had also recommended that proposals for changes in the number of posts should be justified individually. It said requests under the support account should be justified not only on the workload basis, but also in the context of the total resources available to a particular unit or programme to which such resources belonged.

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The Secretary-General has appointed Livio Muzi Falconi as the new United Nations Chief of Protocol, effective 15 June. Mr. Falconi, an Italian national, has served as Italy's Deputy Director of Diplomatic Protocol since 1992. In that capacity, he supervised the organization of the Group of Seven Summit and the World Conference on Transnational Organized Crime, both of which were held in Naples. Mr. Falconi entered his country's Diplomatic Service in 1960.

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The United Nations International Drug Control Programm (UNDCP) has announced that it will establish the Drug Preventive Network of the Americas on 26 June. The Network will be an alliance of non-governmental organizations based in North and South America and the Caribbean.

The creation of the Network will fulfil one of the central goals of the 18-point "Bangkok Declaration" adopted by the 1994 NGO World Forum on Drug Demand reduction. The Declaration stressed the importance of regional and international linkages among non-governmental organizations working to reduce drug and substance abuse.

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